

August 28, 2024

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Harm Reduction

A Brief Overview

Agenda

- What is Harm Reduction?
 - Principles of Harm Reduction
 - Harm Reduction & Substance Use Disorder
 - Misconceptions
 - Benefits
 - Women & Harm Reduction
 - Connection to Other Approaches
- Where We See Good Harm Reduction Practices
- Where Harm Reduction Practices Need Development
- Recommendations for Improvement

What is Harm Reduction?

- Strategies and practices designed to lessen the negative social and / or physical consequences associated with various human behaviors

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Examples of Harm Reduction



seatbelts



face masks



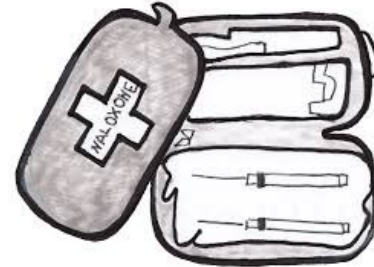
speed limits



helmets



sunscreen



Naloxone / Narcan

Principles of Harm Reduction



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Harm Reduction & Substance Use Disorder

- Substance use disorder is the persistent use of drugs despite the substantial harm and adverse consequences to one's own self and others, as a result of use
- Harm Reduction seeks to reduce the health and social harms associated with addiction and substance use, without necessarily requiring people who use substances from abstaining or stopping

Misconceptions of Harm Reduction Strategies & Programs

- Enables illicit drug use
- Prevents or opposes recovery
- Increase substance use in surrounding communities
- Increase crime in surrounding communities

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Benefits of Harm Reduction

- Cost Saving
- Reduced Spread of Disease
- Overdose Prevention
- Treatment Referral and Initiation
- Contamination Prevention
- Overall Community Safety

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Women & Harm Reduction

- While stigma can impact all people who use substances, women's social location creates additional expectations on their behaviour, roles, and responsibilities. This creates an additional source of shame and judgment for women who use substances.
 - Pregnancy & Parenting
 - Gender Based & Domestic Violence
 - Sex Work
 - Criminalization
 - Homelessness

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Connection to Other Approaches

- **Housing First**
 - Quickly and successfully moving individuals experiencing homelessness into permanent housing without preconditions or barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment or service participation requirements
- **Trauma-Informed**
 - Understands and considers the pervasive nature of trauma and promotes environments of healing and recovery rather than practices and services that may inadvertently re-traumatize
- **Person centered language**
 - Using language that puts people first rather than the disease, symptoms or conditions that they may have

Good Harm Reduction Practices: Within the Sector

- Mainline Needle Exchange
- Direction 180
- ReFix Overdose Prevention Site
- North End Community Health Centre's Managed Alcohol Program
- Substance User Network of the Atlantic Region
- Availability of Naloxone through Pharmacies
- Harm Reduction & Housing Community of Practice

Good Harm Reduction Practices: Within HRM

- 2019 Regional council unanimously endorsed HRM's participation in the development of a Municipal drug strategy
- Public Safety Strategy 2023-2026
- Housing & Homelessness Coordinators Outreach
- Business Improvement Districts Navigator Outreach Program
- Community Mobilization Team
- Safe City and Safe Public Spaces program
- Overall Work throughout the Municipality

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Where Harm Reduction Practices Need Development : Within the Sector

- Hours of overdose prevention site
- No “wet” shelters
- Lack of access to detox and rehab
- Lack of training for staff
- Lack of after-hours responses and supports

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Where Harm Reduction Practices Need Development : Within HRM

- Education and training opportunities around harm reduction, mental health, and crisis intervention for employees throughout HRM
- Appropriate responses for individuals requiring assistance
- Responding to the Calls to Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Recommendations for Improvement

- Review of HRM's existing programs, practices and spaces with a harm reduction lens
- Create and deliver harm reduction training for employees and public
- Continued development of a Municipal drug strategy including harm reduction approaches
- Establish a stabilization centre
- Establish a mobile citizen lead response outreach team
- Advocate for Province to prioritize programming, sheltering and housing options with harm reduction principles

Questions?

- References:

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